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INFO RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 7464
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 0966
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 3769
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 0917
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0656
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0484
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 000857

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ELA, NEA/I, PRM/ANE
EMBASSY ROME FOR NEA/DAS DAVID HALE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/30/2018
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: WFP COUNTRY DIRECTOR DISMISSED, STATUS OF
EMBARGOED RICE UNCLEAR

REF: A. DAMASCUS 820
[1](#)B. DAMASCUS 792

Classified By: CDA Maura Connelly for reasons 1.5 b and d.

[1](#)1. (C) WFP Country Representative Pippa Bradford informed Post on November 26 that she had been placed on administrative leave effective immediately. Bradford also informed us that she had been barred from her office and from communicating with her staff in Syria, adding she had only come to learn about this action after WFP HQ had sent an e-mail to her staff informing them of the decision. While she did not have any specific information, she postulated that a team from Rome would be visiting Damascus to review WFP operations here and presumably her performance. Post has yet to receive official notification regarding this administrative move, nor has WFP named an interim representative. UNHCR Syria reported they have also not received any official notification of her removal.

[1](#)2. (C) It remains unclear to us in Damascus why and at what level WFP took this step. Coming on the heels of WFP's recent difficulties WFP with importing rice for the Iraqi refugee community (ref A & B), we can only speculate that Bradford's decision to protest the SARG action and order the re-export of additional in-bound rice shipments drew objections from within her organization. With no WFP representative in Damascus, we have been unable to ascertain the current status of rice totaling over \$12 million (purchased with contributions from the U.S. and Italy) which the SARG had refused to allow the importation of into Syria. We understand that WFP is paying \$11,000 in daily demurrage costs for the stalled shipment of Italian funded rice.

[1](#)3. (C) Other UN contacts reported that Bradford had been pushing forward a plan to have UNHCR High Commissioner Guterres and WFP Executive Director Sheeran release a joint letter calling on the Syrian government to release these vital food stocks. The current status of this effort remains unclear. It is also unclear who, if anyone, from WFP is speaking with the SARG on this issue.

[1](#)4. (C) Comment: We have always enjoyed an excellent working relationship with Bradford and are perplexed why WFP would suspend its country director, our primary WFP interlocutor, during a time of crisis and without naming an interim replacement. It may be worth seeking clarification with WFP interlocutors in Washington and Rome with the aim of finding a solution to the current impasse on the importation of WFP

rice into Syria.
CONNELLY